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SERMONS

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On the following

SUBJECTS:

VIZ.

The extreme Folly and Wretchedness
of an Atheistic Inclination.

God's Government of the World a
sure and most joyful Truth.

The Dignities and Distinctions of Hu-
man Nature.

Natural and Moral Proofs of a Future
State.

*Preached in the COUNTRY, and published at
the Request of a FRIEND.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and J. PEMBERTON, at the *Golden-
Buck* against St. Dunstan's Church in *Fleetstreet*.

M D C C X X X V I I I.

SERIALS

SUBJECTS



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE
MUSEUM
OF
NATURAL HISTORY
AND
CIVILIZATION

To the REVEREND the
DEAN and CHAPTER of
DURHAM,

THESE
DISCOURSES

Are humbly and gratefully Inscrib'd

By their much obliged

and most devoted Servant,

The AUTHOR.

To the Reader

DEAN AND CHANCELLOR
OF THE UNIVERSITY

THOSE

DISCOURSES

Delivered at the University

By their much obliged

and devoted servant

The Author



PREFACE.

IT seems to be the fix'd Sentiment and Resolution of some Christians, if Reveal'd Religion could not, or should not, be effectually supported, to let Natural Religion sink with it. An Expedient, if I mistake not, as rash and desperate, as it would be for a Man, deprived of certain great and valuable Privileges, to throw up his Life along with them. Let it be supposed, (for a mere Supposition it is, and I am fully persuaded, ever will be) that Christianity should fail, and be disproved: Would the Consequence be fatal to all Religion? Would all natural Principles become incredible, or worthless? It may safely be affirmed, and easily proved; neither the one, nor the other. On which Account the forementioned Determination is Matter of Surprise, as well as Concern. — I see not indeed how it is to be reconciled either with Christian Charity, or common Humanity. If some Men cannot be satisfied with the Evidences of Revelation, or will not duly attend to them; shall we therefore be so cruelly officious, as to hand them down into the Depths of Irreligion
and

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and Atheism? God forbid. On the contrary; till their Minds be more open to Conviction, let them be exhorted and assisted to hold fast those Principles which they do acknowledge; and which are indeed the Fundamentals of all Religion. Whoever sincerely believes a God, a Providence, and a Future State, is surely much more susceptible of Christianity, than he who is destitute of these essential Principles. It may therefore be proposed and recommended to the former with much greater Hopes of Success. In the one Case, we have only a Superstructure to raise on firm Foundations; in the other we must either dig very deep, or build on a Quicksand. — On these, and several other Accounts, I apprehend, no Man can be misemployed, who contributes, even in the lowest Degree, to the Establishment, or Illustration of Truths so greatly and universally momentous.

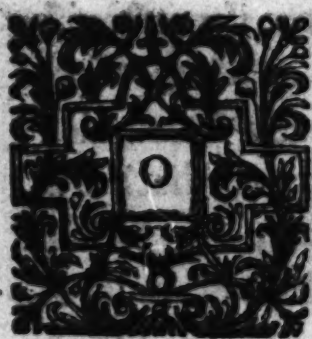
S E R.



SERMON I.

PSAL. xiv. Part of the first Verse.

*The Fool hath said in his Heart, there
is no God.*



F all the false Doctrines, and foolish Opinions, which ever infested the Mind of Man, nothing can possibly equal that of Atheism; which is such a monstrous Contradiction to all Evidence, to all the Powers of Understanding, and the Dictates of common Sense, that it may well be questioned whether any Man can really fall into it by a deliberate Use of his Judgment. — All Nature so clearly points out, and so loudly proclaims, a Creator of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; that

whoever hears not its Voice, and sees not its Proofs, may well be thought wilfully deaf, and obstinately blind. If it be evident, self-evident, to every Man of Thought, that there can be no Effect without a Cause; what shall we say of that manifold Combination of Effects, that Series of Operations, that System of Wonders, which fill the Universe; which present themselves to all our Perceptions, and strike our Minds and our Senses on every Side! Every Faculty, every Object of every Faculty, demonstrates a Deity. The meanest Insect we can see, the minutest and most contemptible Weed we can tread upon, is really sufficient to confound Atheism, and baffle all its Pretensions. How much more that astonishing Variety and Multiplicity of Gods Works with which we are continually surrounded! Let any Man survey the Face of the Earth, or lift up his Eyes to the Firmament; let him consider the Natures and Instincts of brute Animals, and afterwards look into the Operations of his own Mind: Will he presume to say, or suppose, that all the Objects he meets with are nothing more than the Result of unaccountable Accidents, and blind Chance? Can he possibly conceive that such wonderful Order should spring out of Confusion? Or that such perfect Beauty should be ever formed

ed by the fortuitous Operations of unconscious, unactive Particles of Matter? As well, nay better and more easily might he suppose, that an Earthquake might happen to build Towns and Cities; or the Materials carried down by a Flood fit themselves up, without Hands, into a regular Fleet. For what are Towns, Cities, or Fleets, in comparison of the vast and amazing Fabric of the Universe! — In short, the Principle spoken of in my Text offers such Violence to all our Faculties, that it seems scarce credible it should ever really find any Footing in human Understanding.

But is it not there expressly ascribed to the foolish Man, and represented as his Opinion; which, though perhaps he may not think to speak out, he whispers to himself, and *says it in his Heart*? But these Words, for a Reason already given, seem to require another Construction; and will, I believe, fairly admit of it. For the *Heart* of Man is generally represented in Scripture as the Seat of his Affections, rather than of his Judgment. Conformably whereto, the Expression in my Text may denote, not the Man's real Opinion or Persuasion, but his Inclination and Desire. He secretly wishes that there was no God, and endeavours to draw his Belief that Way as much as he can. — If the Words be thus un-

derstood, as they well may, the Subject arising from them will be the extreme Folly and Madness of so desperate a Wish, either in respect of the Publick, or of Himself.

To wish against the Being of a God is to wish Mankind the greatest Mischief and Distress that can possibly be conceiv'd. It is to wish away the grand Support and Security of human Society, and to overturn the Foundations of all Trust, Faith, and Confidence between Man and Man. Was there no Awe of a Supreme Being, no Terrors of a Future Judgment to restrain us, what Government upon Earth would be able to maintain itself, or find Protection for its Subjects? Injuries and Outrages, Fraud and Falsehood, would prevail and spread far and wide, and the Iniquities of Mankind know no Bounds.——

What wise Man would chuse, or even dare to live in a Community of Atheists, if such a one could be found? Let us for the present suppose such a one, and that it subsisted under an advantageous and well-chosen Form of Government. How loose and precarious nevertheless would be the Obligations both of the Governors, and the governed? The one ruling, and the other submitting, not *in the Fear of God*, but only in the Fear of each other: The one unawed by any Apprehensions of

of an invifible Power, which might call them to an Account for Male-adminiftration; the other obeying not *for Confcience Sake*, but from a Principle of *Wrath*, and civil Punifhment.—— But is not Virtue amiable, and worthy, and even beneficial in its own Nature? And as fuch, might it not influence, and incline, and oblige the very Atheifts themfelves? Let thefe Points be, in fome Meafure, acknowledged; what follows? The probable Welfare of fuch a Community, or the Safety and Prevalence of their Government? By no means; as will be fhewn very fpeedily. But let us firft go on to obferve that, on the prefent Suppofition, that great Bond of Fidelity, that principal Guard and Support of Life and Property, an Oath, could have no Place at all. That folemn Appeal to Heaven, for the Confirmation of Evidence, the Decifion of Controverfy, and the Prevention of Strife, would be thus a quite groundlefs and impoffible Thing. And how wretched, how deplorable would be the Condition of Mankind, was there no God for guilty Men to fear, or honeft Men to invoke! No almighty and all-righteous Governor to protect Innocence, encourage Virtue, and controul the Infolence of licentious Men.—— There would indeed be left the Sword of the
Civil

Civil Magistrate; and very great Occasion there would be for it: but yet it would be, in a great measure, useless for want of Direction. For how should Evil-doers in this Case be convicted? No Evidence could be sworn, excepting in the Magistrate's Name, who might perhaps be deified for that Purpose. But unless he could also be vested with a Power of searching Mens Hearts, such an Expedient must be altogether fruitless. In order therefore to convict Criminals, would it be proper and safe to examine Evidence unsworn, and lay the whole Strefs of every Cause on Mens bare Words? Supposing the World without a supreme Governor, this Rule might unavoidably take Place; but every one must see how fatal the Consequence would prove to all Societies. For, on that Supposition, how small a Number of Mankind would deserve to be trusted? The Credit even of the fairest Characters would be very precarious; and as to the Generality, they would follow their several Humours and Interests without Remorse or Controul.——Again; the Restraints of the Civil Magistrate would be insufficient on another Account. For without Question there are many dark Frauds, and secret Villanies that cannot fall under his Cognizance. In all such Cases Men must either be restrain-

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ed by the Authority of their own Consciences, or not at all. And what Authority, what Power could Conscience have, were all Apprehensions of a Deity removed and set aside? Considered as Gods Vicegerent, it is indeed, and well may be, a powerful Principle: But according to the Fool's impious Wish recorded in my Text, the Force of it would be diminished and dwindled almost to nothing.

— However lovely, and beautiful, and beneficial, Virtue may be in itself; and however odious, deformed, and destructive, Vice is in its own Nature; yet considering the known Corruptions and Depravations of Mankind, these Considerations would by no means suffice to keep them in Order, and secure the Peace of the World, without a sovereign Legislator, and the prevailing Sanctions of Reward and Punishment. To be directed merely by the Rules of right Reason, and influenced by the Charms of Virtue alone, requires greater Integrity of Mind, a more excellent Disposition, and perhaps a more elegant and refined Taste, than can ever be expected from the Bulk of Mankind. They are all capable of being moved by Hopes and Fears; by the Apprehensions of final Happiness and Misery; but the Attractions of moral Beauty, and virtuous Excellence, can have
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very little Effect on any but Men of Honour and Probity, and indeed a superior Turn of Mind. And even in respect of these, mere unsupported Virtue must be very weak and uncertain, in Comparifon of that which is accompanied with Religion, and connected with it. We plainly fee, degenerate as the World is, that innumerable Diforders are prevented by the Authority of Parents, Masters, and Magistrates; without which all Societies would soon be subverted, and human Life become a mere Scene of Riot, Rapine, and Confusion. And if fuch small Clans and Communities of Men stand in fuch need of *Superiors* and Governors, does not the Care and Conduct of the Whole require a *Supreme*? Human Authority, however it may restrain outward Actions, yet cannot take hold of Mens Confcienccs. This can only be done by the great Searcher of Hearts. And yet without it all the Governments upon Earth would be very superficial, and of small Force. We find in Fact, how frequently and familiarly Men break afunder the very Bonds of Religion, ftrong as they are: How much greater Lengths then would they run without Religion? Who can imagine that the Generality of Mankind could be held in any tolerable Order by the Beauty of Virtue, or the Tyes
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S E R M O N I. 9

of Honour? These might, in some measure, prevail with a few select Spirits; at least while nothing appeared in Opposition to them: But in the Day of fierce Tryal, and strong Temptation, it is not to be supposed that any Mans Integrity should be able to bear up without the Supports of Religion.—— In short, without the Belief of a Deity, Society could not subsist; or if it did, it would be worse than any Solitude. As no Government upon Earth could answer the Purpose of its Institution, so the principal Blessings and Comforts of Life would be utterly destroy'd. No Man could safely rely either on his Fellow-Creatures, or himself; but mutual Jealousies and universal Suspicions would produce endless Divisions, Contentions, and Animosities, to the total Subversion of every Thing good and desirable in Life.

But further; abstracting from Society and Government, we may go on to consider how the Minds and Conditions of private Persons would be affected by the Supposition of a forlorn and fatherless World. Under the Tutition and Government of infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, every thing appears with a comfortable Aspect. Men never need to want the purest Comforts, and most perfect Satisfaction, while *God is their Portion.* From
Him

Him cometh not only every good and perfect Gift which we possess at present; but those pleasing Hopes, and joyful Prospects, which sweeten the Cares and Toils of Life, and lye at the Bottom of all our Enjoyments. On this Account, whether the World frown or smile, the wise Man is neither highly transported, nor deeply dejected. Whatever be his Lot, the Peace of his Mind is secured, and his Heart at rest. For his Hopes are founded on a Rock, and his Treasure fixed where nothing can touch it. — But, on the other hand, the atheistic Scheme reverses every thing; blackens the whole Face of Nature, and involves human Life in Darkness and Despair. Its better Things would yield no Contentment, and its worse admit of no Consolation: Or, in other Words, Adversity would be insupportable, and Prosperity joyless. Prosperity did I call it? The Word is improper, and the Thing impossible, on this mad Supposition. Without a God, a Providence, and a Future State, there could be no such thing as Prosperity; no Satisfaction, no real Enjoyment for rational Beings; nor even any true Peace and Tranquility of Mind. No Affluence, no Variety of worldly Goods would be capable of yielding any Content to a thinking Man. He might entertain him-
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self as he could with secular Amusements; or
 stupify himself with sensual Pleasures; but
 what might become of his nobler and better
 Part? What Provision would there be for the
Man? Should he engage himself in the Con-
 templation of Truth? To what Purpose, if
 he had nothing to expect beyond this Life.
 That one Truth, if it was a Truth, would
 spoil all the rest, and turn them into mere
 Dreams and Shadows. Should he then *apply*
his Heart to know Wisdom, and practise Vir-
 tue? With what View? Should he endeavour
 to improve himself, to purify his Mind, and
 perfect his Nature, merely to prepare for the
 Grave, and fit himself for a State of Oblivion?
 Would any Man freight a Ship richly, in or-
 der to provide for a certain Shipwreck at the
 End of his Voyage? If it be alledged, that
 to aim at Virtue in such Circumstances would
 not be entirely lost Labour, on account of its
 intrinsic Worth and Usefulness; it is readily
 granted. But alas! How faintly must it ope-
 rate under such desperate Difficulties and Dis-
 couragements? And indeed, excluding the
 Comforts of Religion, and the Hopes of Fu-
 turity, no sort of Good could be rightly re-
 lished. Virtue itself would only be consider-
 ed and chosen as an Opiate, to sooth Men's
 Minds, and soften their Afflictions. And
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whatever Means were used, Man's Life would perpetually be overcast, and his Days pass on in one continued Gloom. The more he possessed of worldly Goods, and the higher he rose in his Condition and Circumstances, the more obnoxious he would be to the Fears of Death, and the Horrors of utter Extinction. Whatever Advantages and Successes he met with, would only be the Mockeries of Fortune: Like Prizes befalling a Man who lies under the Sentence of a speedy Execution.

And since Atheism corrupts and poisons Prosperity, what dismal Effects would it produce in Adversity! Would it not immediately turn Distress into Despair, and Misery into Madness? An unhappy Mortal deep sunk in Troubles and Misfortunes, and struggling with innumerable Hardships here upon Earth, and yet destitute at the same time of a Protector and a Patron in Heaven, is a Condition not to be even imagined without Horror. Let a Man be surrounded with Crosses and Calamities; let him be attacked at once by Want, Pain, Sickness, Sorrow, and all the Varieties of Wretchedness; while he is convinced that God governs the World with perfect Wisdom and Goodness, he never needs to want solid Consolation. Whatever he may endure for the present, he has, or may have, that Fund
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of Hope in his Mind, that Relief in his Eye, which are abundantly capable of supporting him. But supposing him void of this Hope, and that Relief; what would he then be, and which Way would he turn himself? If any one preached to him the Fool's Doctrine in my Text, would he be able to draw any Comfort out of it? If we suppose him prevail'd on to drink of the Cup of Atheism; how would it go down, or sit upon his Stomach? Would it prove a powerful Cordial, and enable him to bear up under the Load that lay upon him? Alas! instead of alleviating his Sorrows, it would be an infinite Addition to them: Instead of yielding him Patience and Comfort in his Distress, it would be apt to confound all the Powers of his Soul, and drive him to Distraction. Doubtless every Man in Misery, if his Sufferings have not deprived him of his Senses, must think of Atheism with the utmost Regret, Detestation, and Abhorrence; as it robs him of his only Refuge, and leaves him destitute of all possible Comfort. He will be so far from *saying in his Heart*, or endeavouring to persuade himself *there is no God*; that he will naturally cry out with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? Thou, Lord, art my Rock, and my Fortress; my strong Habitation, whereunto I may conti-*

nually resort. When his Soul fainteth within him, he will trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

Upon the whole, the Thought or Wish expressed in my Text, is certainly the blackest, most impious, and most execrable one, that ever entered into the Heart of Man. It may be looked upon as the Sum and Substance of all possible Curses; as comprehending universal Ruin. A Man had better, infinitely better, with the Sun out of the Firmament, and all the Lights of Heaven extinguished for ever. For these are all inconsiderable in comparison of the great Fountain of Light and Glory; who framed and fixed them in the Heavens for the Use of his Creatures, and who is ever able to enlighten us with them, or without them.

But perhaps it may be urged in Excuse or Extenuation of this mad Wish, this monstrous Inclination, that the foolish or wicked Man spoken of in my Text, takes it up, as it were, in his own Defence. Conscious of his Sin and Guilt, he cannot but know that his vicious Conduct must highly have offended the righteous Governor of the World, if such a Governor there be; the Consequence of which is greatly to be dreaded. And though *Sentence against him be not executed speedily,*
yet

yet he knows that such a Delay is no Argument of Impunity. Hence he is led to wish in secret against God's Existence, and to persuade himself, as far as possibly he can, that it may only prove an imaginary Terror. And though the Proofs of the contrary are more numerous than the Sands on the Sea-shore, and clearer than the Sun at Noon-day; yet he shuts his Eyes, and darkens his Understanding, as well as he can; and thus perhaps deludes himself into some Degree of Atheism.

Supposing then this to be a just State of the Case, we may readily perceive the desperate Folly and Stupidity of such a Proceeding; and that upon these two Accounts: In the *first* place, can the Natures of Things be any way altered by this Man's Wishes and Self-Delusions? If they cannot, which he certainly knows or may know on the least Reflection, what can he propose to gain by them? Should he be able to silence or evade, in some measure, the Cries and Clamours of his Conscience; yet the grand Issue and Event of his Wickedness will be no way mended or mitigated thereby: On the contrary, it will be rendered much worse. But, *Secondly*, as he trusts to a fruitless and unprofitable Expedient, so he fatally neglects the only secure and effectual Way of retrieving his Condition. In-

stead of wishing and struggling against God's Existence, why does he not endeavour, what in him lies, to propitiate and pacify him? Is it not, in all respects, his best and wisest Course heartily to repent and reform? Suppose a Man engaged in a Rebellion against his Prince, and accordingly apprehended and convicted; what Means would he use to extricate himself? Would he take great Pains to suppose, and believe, that there was really no such Man? Or would he call in question his Title to the Crown? Why neither. Men very seldom act so stupidly in their secular Affairs. He would instantly make Submission; acknowledge his Crime, and promise inviolable Allegiance for the future. And why not the same Method followed by Rebels against Heaven? Is not the King of Kings as placable and merciful as any earthly Prince? Nay, is he not infinitely more so? With him, sincere Repentance and Amendment is secure of a Pardon; though it often unavoidably fails and falls short with the other. — What Folly therefore, what Madness is it in the Sinner, however guilty, to amuse himself with idle Imaginations, and senseless Projects, instead of embracing the only safe and sure Means of Relief? To say in his Heart there is no God, is to give the Lye to his own Conscience, and

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to contradict the whole Works of Nature from Top to Bottom. And to wish there was *no God*, is the Wish of a Traytor, or a Mad-man; as including his own Ruin, and the Destruction of the whole World.——What he should have said, and what every wicked Man ought to say, is plainly this; there certainly is a God; I perceive it, and am assured of it, beyond all Possibility of Dispute. But this God is *good and gracious; plenteous in Mercy, full of Compassion; not willing that any should perish, but that the wicked should turn from his way, and live.* I will therefore address myself, with deep Humility and Contrition, to this merciful Judge; and endeavour by a new Course of Life to render myself an Object of his Favour and Forgiveness.

Having thus briefly represented the heinous Wickedness, and horrid Extravagance of the Suggestion, or Wish, set forth in my Text; I shall only beg leave to add the following Remark, which naturally arises, and offers itself to our Thoughts, from what has been said.——If there be so great Folly and Impiety in cherishing Atheistic Principles, or wishing there was *no God*; how inexcusably foolish and criminal are those Men, who believe and acknowledge a God, and yet live as if there was none! Who own him in their

Thoughts and Words, and yet *deny him in their Works!* Can any thing be more absurd, as well as audacious, than, when a Man is thoroughly convinced of the Being and Perfections of the Divine Majesty, presuming to resist his Will, disregard his Authority, and confront the Laws of Infinite Wisdom with the blind Counsels of his own Folly? Surely this is too daring, too desperate for Dust and Ashes. Shall such a Worm, such an Insect as Man, contend with Omnipotence, and act wilfully in Opposition and Defiance to his Maker? Alas! the Fact, however strange, is notorious and common. Though it be absolutely impossible Man should ever *harden himself against God, and prosper*; yet the Confidence of his own foolish Heart bears him up, and he rushes thoughtless into his own Perdition. — But supposing we do not suffer ourselves to Sin with so high a hand; yet how prone are we to neglect the Honour and Service confessedly due to the Divine Majesty? Neither *glorifying Him as God*, nor walking before Him with that filial Awe, and pious Reverence, which are plainly the bounden Duty of all Men, and doubly of Christians. To confess a Heavenly Father, a Supreme Lord of all Power and Perfection, and at the same time pretend

pretend it needless to worship Him; is contradicting a Man's own Perceptions, and falsifying what he feels within his own Breast. Will any Man be satisfied, who finds himself neglected or slighted by his Children and Servants? No; he sees it to be wrong in itself, as well as mischievous in its Consequences; and accordingly never fails to condemn and resent it. How comes it then to pass, that we behave in this very manner towards our common Parent, and universal Master? Is God the only Parent, the only Benefactor, who may be disrespected and slighted by his ungrateful Children and Dependents? The only becoming Answer to these Questions is Remorse, and Shame, and Confusion of Face. We are manifestly self-condemned; and there is no room even for the least Shadow of an Excuse. ——— What remains then but that we rectify our Thoughts and Conceptions of the Supreme Being; that we ever think and speak of Him, with all possible Reverence; that we strive to attain an uniform Obedience to his sacred Will; that we *worship Him devoutly in Spirit and Truth, and give Him the Glory due unto his Name*; that we

enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise: For on all Accounts He is worthy, infinitely worthy, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Adoration, now, henceforth, and for evermore.



S E R.



SERMON II.

PSAL. xcvi. Part of the first Verse.

*The Lord reigneth, let the Earth re-
joyce.*— Or, according to the other
Translation,

*The Lord is King, the Earth may be
glad thereof.*

 O acknowledge a Deity, and yet suppose, as some of the Heathen Philosophers pretended to do, that He is altogether unconcerned either in the Creation or Government of the World, is owning him in Words, and disowning him in Reality. In like manner, to confess that God made the World, and all Things therein, and at the same time deny his Care and Providence over it; is, in Effect, maintaining a God without Divine Attributes. It is maintaining inconsistent Opinions, and separating Things

Things essentially united. As sure as there is a God, so sure it is that he must be supremely wise, and infinitely good. But to create the World, and then leave it to itself, and all the Confusion consequent thereupon, is a Conduct impossible to be reconciled with either of those Perfections. If our clearest Ideas are to be trusted, there would be no Wisdom, no Goodness at all in such a Procedure. For whatever Ends might be proposed in the Production of such a forlorn World, they could not possibly be answered. Neither the Creator's Glory, nor his Creatures Happiness, could be in any measure accomplished without a Providence. And as to any other Intentions, we are not able to frame any Conception of them. However, they must needs likewise be ineffectual, and frustrate on the same Supposition.

But let us examine the Grounds of this important Doctrine somewhat more particularly and distinctly. Strictly speaking, the Creation necessarily requires the continued Influence and perpetual Support of its Creator. The natural World could not subsist a Moment without the Almighty Hand which first formed it. Should God be pleased at any time to withdraw his Power and Protection, all Nature must sink in an Instant. Most certainly
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every thing would immediately run to Ruin, and probably fall to nothing. Both Reason and Revelation assure us, that *by him all Things consist.* That *He preserveth and upholdeth all Things by the Word of His Power.* That *in His Hand is the Soul of every living Thing, and the Breath of all Mankind:* And that *in Him we live, move, and have our Being.* In this respect therefore, God's Providence not only stands on firm Foundations, and sure Evidence, but appears absolutely necessary; since the World could no more continue without his Aid, than it could exist without it at first. The great Machine of the Universe, so wonderfully framed and fitted as it is, yet cannot go of itself; as unavoidably depending on its Almighty Author, and naturally requiring his Concurrence, to keep it not only in Order, but in Being. Nor does this argue any Defect in his Workmanship; because an independent System of Creatures is not only absurd, but utterly impossible.

Nevertheless, it is not so much this, as another Branch of Divine Providence, that we are chiefly to understand by the Declaration in my Text. God superintends indeed the whole; and governs the natural, as well as the moral World. All Creatures are subject to his Power and Rule, whether they be animate,

mate, or inanimate: But when his Reign, his Dominion, his *Kingdom* are spoken of; we are primarily, if not peculiarly, to understand his Government of moral Agents, and rational Subjects. As these are his noblest Productions, and stand at the Top of the Creation, they must needs be the principal Objects of his Care and Providence. To direct mere Matter, and produce out of it so much Order and Convenience, so much Beauty and Variety, so much Symmetry and Proportion, requires doubtless great Power and Wisdom; but to preside over the intellectual System, to rule not only the *Children of Men, and the Kingdoms of the Earth*, but all *Angels, and Authorities, and Heavenly Powers*; such an Administration as this is Divine in the highest Sense; and such a Kingdom most worthy of him, whose Power is boundless, and his *Understanding infinite*: and who upon that Account is *the only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*.

But to proceed; this Kingdom of God, this Government of the moral World, being in a more especial manner the Doctrine of my Text, and indeed most expressly taught throughout the whole Scriptures, need not be more particularly proved from thence. Let us therefore briefly and impartially enquire how

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it appears to the Reason of our own Minds.

—The Question then is, if it can be called so, whether God's Creatures, his intelligent Creatures, be under his Care, Protection, and Government; or whether they are wholly abandon'd to their own Management, and given up to their own Guidance. If they be left to themselves, and the Government of the World is refused by the Maker of it; no other Account can possibly be given of the thing, but that he either wanted Power or Inclination: Either was not able to execute this great Charge, or not willing. And if both these Suppositions are evidently false and groundless, the Consequence must be the Truth of the Proposition set forth in my Text.

—That God neither did, nor could want Power to govern the World, is manifest even to Demonstration. For not to mention that Omnipotence is an essential Attribute of the Divine Nature, most certain it is, that he who was able to create the World, must much more be able to direct and govern it; Creation implying and requiring the highest of all Power. He who could raise the Universe from nothing, and fix it originally in the most exact Order, cannot possibly fail of full Power to preserve and regulate it. *He who planted the Ear, as the Psalmist observes, shall be not hear;*

bear; he who formed the Eye, shall he not see? Can any thing escape his Perception who inhabits Eternity and Infinity? Who vitally exists every where, and can be absent no where? And as nothing is unknown to him, so nothing is *impossible with him*. Nothing can *resist his Will*, or make the least Opposition to his Decrees. Omnipotence knows no Difficulties; but with the greatest Ease *accomplishes* whatever it *pleases*, and *subdueth all Things unto itself*. The whole Creation is full of this Truth; and every Object we meet with, proclaims the incomprehensible Power and Majesty of him that made it.

Since then it cannot be supposed, without the greatest Contradiction to his Nature, that God should be *unable* to govern the World; we are next to consider whether he could be supposed *unwilling*. And the Resolution of this Point will readily be found. For whatever is most agreeable to perfect Wisdom and Goodness, must in this Case be Fact. Most infallibly God is ever willing to determine, and do, what is wisest and best. Can then any Man think it agreeable to perfect Wisdom, that God should be so regardless of the Works of his Hands, as immediately to lay aside all Care and Concern about them? That he should make the World, and then
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forfake it as soon as he had made it? That he should furnish and fit it up in the noblest manner, and replenish it with an endless Variety of Inhabitants; That he should produce innumerable Orders of Beings, and Ranks of Creatures, many of them formed after his own Divine Image, and qualified for the Knowledge and Imitation of himself; and when he had so done, relinquish the whole, and give every thing up to Chance and Confusion? How can such a Conduct as this be ascribed to any wise Agent? And much less to infinite Wisdom. For as we before observed, whatever Ends or Intentions the Creator proposed, they could never be accomplished without his Direction and Concurrence.——But perhaps it may be urged, that the World was framed in such wonderful Order and Perfection, as to stand in no further need of the Creator's Superintendence; and that his rational Creatures were made capable of guiding themselves, and governing those beneath them; and that thereby the Order of the World might be maintain'd without the Divine Interposition.——The Answer to which is, that every Part of this Pretence is groundless. It is demonstrable that the very material World cannot be kept in Order by second Causes, but continually stands in need of the Creator's Influence,

as might be shewn at large. And much less could the Order and Harmony of the intellectual World be maintained without the Divine Administration. It is true, Men are endued with Reason, and Angels with more; but yet both Men and Angels being endued also with Liberty, and imperfect, might act against the Light of their own Minds, and fall into Disorder; and accordingly both have actually done so. On which Account, were it not for God's Providence and Government, it is evident that the moral World, as well as the natural, would become a mere Chaos, and fall into inextricable Confusion. Is it not necessary for the public Security, that evil Men and evil Angels be curbed and restrained? Is it not necessary that Innocence be protected, and Virtue encouraged? That Guilt be exposed and prosecuted, and Vice and Villany checked and punished? And how should any thing of this kind be effectually done, if God did not sit at the Helm, direct all Affairs, and dispose of all Events, according to the Rules of Righteousness and Truth.— But in order to discover the Weakness of this Plea, we need only take notice how it would hold in any human Establishments. Is any thing to be done without Rulers and Governors? And supposing a Set of Laws, of the
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best Laws, already made, will they execute themselves? 'Tis very true that Men have Reason to direct them, and Laws of various Kinds; but 'tis likewise as true, that many Men have wild Humours, fierce Desires, and furious Passions, which frequently prompt them to act in Defiance both of Law and Reason. On which Account, and for the Enforcement and Support of both, an executive Power is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary in all States and Communities. And must not this Observation hold much stronger in respect of the whole Creation? If the several Societies among Men require Rulers and Governors, and cannot subsist without them; what can we think of the Universe itself? Must not the Whole stand in greater need of Government, than any Part? Most certain therefore it is, that the all-wise Creator would never produce such a great and glorious System, and then leave it in a State of Anarchy; this being utterly inconsistent with all the Rules of Wisdom that we are capable of discovering.

Nor is it less repugnant to his Righteousness and Goodness. As perfectly good, he must propose the Welfare of his Creatures; and in order thereto, he would not fail to direct and govern them. For as we have al-

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ready seen, if he had left them to themselves, they could neither expect Happiness, Security, nor Quiet. ——— Again, his Guidance and Government of the World clearly follows from the Rectitude of his Nature. It is impossible that he should be ignorant of the Behaviour of his Creatures. He must see at all times whether they do well or ill, whether they act virtuously or wickedly; and, as a righteous Being, cannot fail to judge them accordingly. If God did not govern the World, no sufficient Distinction could be maintained between Virtue and Vice; nay, in many Cases it would happen the latter prospered more than the former. Vice would often succeed and flourish, and Virtue fall into extreme Distress. Now this, I say, is what a righteous God cannot possibly suffer; not finally I mean. He may suffer it for a season, and in Fact we find that he actually does so; inso-much that his Government of the World has been sometimes called in question on this very Account. But certainly without just Grounds. The irregular Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life is indeed a clear Proof of a Future State, wherein every thing will be punctually adjusted and set to rights; but it proves nothing at all against the Doctrine we are considering. As sure as God is
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S E R M O N II. 31

righteous and holy, Vice will suffer, and Virtue will prevail and prosper in due time. But no reason can be shewn why the present time must needs be the proper time: so far from it, that good reasons may be given for the contrary. However, since it must be done sooner or later, either in this Life or the next; since it necessarily follows from the Perfections of the Divine Nature, that the righteous will be protected and encouraged, and the wicked punished; and since moreover this can only be done by the great Searcher of Hearts; the Consequence must be that the World is govern'd by him.

Should we go on to inquire how he governs it, and presume to search into the Methods and Measures of Divine Providence, we may easily bewilder ourselves in a Speculation vastly too high for us. We have all the Reason in the World to assure ourselves that God's Government is most perfect, in all Respects; but to account for the Direction and Disposal of particular Events, and to discover how far they come under, and coincide with general Laws, seem Undertakings far above our present Faculties. ——— We do not so much as know, with any Certainty, whether there be any just Ground for distinguishing, as we ordinarily do, between a General, and a Parti-

cular Providence. All particular Events, for ought we know, may be superintended and disposed by general Laws. I might explain and confirm this Observation by various Instances and Suppositions; but I shall only mention at present that which follows; a Supposition not only very antient, but very natural, and therefore more easy to be conceived, and more apt to be entertained. ——— What I mean is, that the Particularities of human Life may be specially provided for by a Delegation of Power and Authority to subordinate Agents; by whose invifible Intervention Events may be directed agreeably to the Will and Wisdom of the Supreme Governor: and that perhaps in perfect Confiftence with the ftated Laws of the natural World. What Abfurdity, what Impropropriety, in fupposing fuch a Provision as this for the Tuition and Government of Mankind? Can we think it any Derogation from the Honour and Majesty of the Supreme Ruler, to inveft certain Beings of exalted Powers and Perfections with the Adminiftration of his Providential Decrees; they prefiding over the feveral Parts of the Universe, while he himfelf, who alone is capable of it, informs and directs the Whole? This feems perfectly conformable to that Subordination and Scale of Beings, which prevail
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throughout all Nature, as far as our Faculties are able to search. Could we see further, we might probably find every System, every habitable Globe, under the Government of Vicegerents; and perhaps the various Districts and Provinces of each divided amongst the Host of Heaven, and respectively administered according to the Appointments of unerring Wisdom. If this be agreeable to Nature and Reason, as must, I think, be allowed; I may safely add, that it is by no means disagreeable to Revelation: so far from it, that we find in Scripture frequent Intimations of this amazing Scheme of Providence. I see not therefore why it may not be supposed a general Law of God's moral Government; and that such a one, as no way interferes, but perfectly consists with his Laws of Nature.—— But I return to what is more directly the Doctrine of my Text.

Thus then it appears from the plain Principles of Reason that *the Lord is King*, as we read in my Text: And the next thing to be considered is the Inference which there follows, *the Earth may be glad thereof*. And in truth it is one of the justest and most natural Inferences in the World. For what is there in all the Compass of Nature, or even within the Reach of human Imagination, that can

administer to the Minds of Men so much true Comfort, Contentment, and Complacency, as this single Fact is capable of doing? The most desirable, and most joyful Truth, that can either be uttered, or conceived, is, that *the Lord is King*, and that *his Dominion endureth throughout all Ages*. If we have any Thought, any Reflection, must we not needs *be glad* to find ourselves in the Hands, and under the Protection of that Governor, whose great and constant Aim is the Safety and Felicity of all his Subjects? Who enjoins us no other Laws than those of Truth and Righteousness; which at the same time are the Rule, the inviolable Rule of his own Actions. A Governor, who never wants Power to do whatever he pleases, and who never pleases to do any thing but what is just and fit. Who is gracious, merciful, and long-suffering; full of Gentleness, Goodness, and Loving-kindness; and whose *tender Mercies are over all his Works*. In short, a Governor, who is so far from dealing with his Creatures by any capricious Rules, or arbitrary Measures; that his Will is the very *Law of Kindness*: All his Precepts are Favours and Blessings, and his very Judgments Benefactions.

If we reflect on our Condition and Circumstances in this present World, we cannot
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but find Cause to rejoice, on all Accounts, that we are under the Tuition and Administration of the Supreme Being. Considering our Wants and Infirmities, our Frailties and Follies, and how unable we are to help ourselves; our whole Life ought to be looked upon as a State of Minority: Even in our best and wisest Period, to lose the Guardianship of Heaven would be certain Ruin. This is our grand Support and Security; and comparatively speaking, the sole Foundation of our Hope and Trust. We are beset on all Sides, and threatned from all Quarters; are compassed about with a great Variety of Dangers and Distresses. Many Difficulties we meet with that we cannot conquer; many Obstacles that we cannot surmount. Numberless Evils hang over our Heads, ready to fall upon us, and crush us, every Instant. When Misfortunes are at a distance, very often we cannot foresee them; and when we do foresee them, we often know not how to prevent them. And when they arrive, and are actually upon us, we frequently are at a loss how to redress them, or where to find a Remedy.—We are liable to so many Disasters without, and so many Disorders within; are so much exposed to the Fury of the Elements, and the greater Fury of lawless and

violent Men; find so many Snares and Temptations planted in our Way; have so many Hazards and Hardships to encounter; such a Number of Infirmities, Corruptions, and evil Habits to subdue in ourselves; and such Force, Fraud, and Falshood to withstand in others; that were we deprived of the Protection of Divine Providence, we should be left utterly desolate, and sink down into the Depths of Sin, and Sorrow, and Misery, as naturally *as the Sparks fly upwards*. — But, on the other hand, if we consider ourselves as the Objects of God's Care and Concern; that he is our Ruler, our Defender, our Guide; and *we his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*; the Scene changes, our Condition brightens, and every thing appears with a new Face. If we take Care not to forfeit his Favour, nothing need to dismay us; for nothing can greatly hurt us. *Though we walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death; though the Earth were removed, and the Mountains carried into the midst of the Sea*; yet should we need to fear no Evil; for *God is our Refuge and Strength, a present Help, and a sure Support, in every Trouble*. Are we ignorant? God is omniscient. Are we impotent? He is almighty. Are we apt to err, and prone to Sin and Folly? He is unerring Wisdom,

Wisdom, and spotless Perfection. If he be on our Side, who can be against us? If he protect us, what can touch us? Are we surrounded with Dangers and Calamities, Troubles and Tryals; insomuch that our Case appears desperate? He can extricate us with the greatest Ease, and deliver us in a Moment. For all Nature is in his Hand, and the whole Creation at his Beck. — So far then we have just Cause to rejoice, and be glad, that *the Lord is King.*

But further; as there are many and great Evils to be avoided, so there is a great Variety of Good to be sought after. Many Wants and Wishes we unavoidably have; many natural Desires that require to be gratified; many craving Appetites, and clamorous Affections, that will be provided for, or continually torment us. Though we may subsist, yet we cannot be said to prosper, in a temporal Sense, without a competent Share of the Comforts and Conveniences of Life. And had we nothing to depend on but our own Endeavours; how little should we be able to make of them? We are apt to ascribe our Successes to ourselves, and our own Conduct; but doubtless, in a great measure, very unjustly. They are chiefly owing to divine Providence, and the Succours of Heaven; which conduct
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us, though unseen, and carry us on to prosperous Events. Without these invisible Aids, we should fail, and fall short, in almost every Undertaking. No Art, no Skill, no Diligence would avail us; if Providence forsook us. It would only be *lost Labour, that we hasted to rise early, and eat the Bread of Carefulness*, if we had nothing to trust to but our own Endeavours. Nor could any of our Fellow-Creatures ensure our Success. For, comparatively speaking, *vain is the Help of Man*, and precarious are all his Purposes. — But tho' human Means be insufficient for the accomplishing of our Ends, and the satisfying of our Desires; yet what may we not expect from the Interposition of Heaven, and the Wisdom and Bounty of God's Providence? What Good may we not hope for, if we be not wanting to ourselves? Whatever Objects we set our Hearts upon; whatever Blessings we have in View; if they be fit for us, and we for them, we shall, in due time, assuredly obtain them. And is not this Consideration abundantly sufficient to satisfy any reasonable Mind? If any Enjoyment be, in its Consequences, mischievous to ourselves, we are false to our own Interest if we desire it: and if it be detrimental to the Public, we cannot innocently pretend to it. But under these
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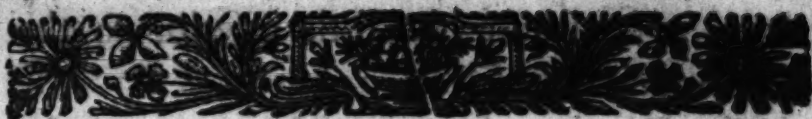
Limitations, our Pursuits will not fail to be crowned with Success.—And what a Happiness, what an Honour is it to the Children of Men, to have, I will not say such a Governor, but such a Patron, such a Benefactor, such a Friend? A Friend whose Power is commensurate to his Wisdom, and his Goodness to both. A Friend, so kind and constant, as never to desert those who do not desert him. Whose Favours are inestimable, and his Bounty inexhaustible. In a word, on whom we entirely depend for all the Blessings of this Life, and all our Hopes in the next. — Upon the whole, to be under the Divine Rule and Government is the most desirable Circumstance in the World. To be directed by infinite Wisdom, protected by infinite Power, and befriended by infinite Goodness, is the happiest Situation, and the most glorious Privilege that could belong either to Men or Angels.

What remains then, but that we chearfully and thankfully submit to the Authority of our Heavenly Ruler? That we pay a constant Regard, and a willing Obedience to his sacred Laws; the Violation of which is not only Rebellion against God, but Enmity against ourselves. By Disobedience and Impenitence, we may turn the *Joy* and *Gladness*, spoken of

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in my Text, into Grief and Terror. For most undoubtedly the *Judge of all the Earth will do what is right.* He will not fail to execute Judgment on obstinate and incorrigible Offenders. But if we obey his Laws, and keep his Commandments; if we sincerely endeavour to fulfil his Will, and discharge our Duty; we are sure of his Acceptance, Encouragement, and Favour. Most gently shall we be treated, most graciously indulged, and most abundantly rewarded. *No good Thing will be withhold from his faithful Subjects and Servants.* Happy then are all they who are in such a Case; yea blessed are the People who have the Lord for their God.





SERMON III.

PSAL. VIII. 5.

*For thou hast made him a little lower
than the Angels, and hast crowned
him with Glory and Honour.*



WHATEVER was the immediate Occasion of this Psalm, and whatever remote Views may be ascribed to it of a Prophetic Nature; yet, in its direct and primary Construction, it evidently contains a pious Contemplation and Acknowledgment of God's unspeakable Wisdom and Goodness manifested in the Works of the Creation, and more particularly in the Formation of Man; whom he elsewhere represents as *wonderfully made*, and here sets forth as peculiarly favoured and eminently distinguished; vested with such Powers and Privileges, and possessed of such Honours and Dignities,

nities, as constitute him little inferior to the very Angels themselves.

The Dignity of human Nature may be considered either comparatively, that is, in relation to the various Tribes of Creatures beneath us, or absolutely and in itself. For wherever there is found the Image of the great Creator, there, we may affirm, is real and absolute Dignity; which therefore may justly be ascribed to Man, on account of his being expressly allowed in Scripture to be formed after God's Image, and of those high Powers and Faculties wherein that Image is supposed to consist. The Honour indeed which is done him in Scripture by the Attribution of his Maker's Likeness, has been by some differently explained, and understood; as if it consisted not in personal Powers, but in that Authority and Dominion given him over all other living Creatures on the Face of the Earth. Whatever Resemblance may arise from this Dominion, it cannot, I think, be allowed that this is the principal Ground of the Honour we are speaking of; forasmuch as it seems only a natural Consequence of those intellectual and moral Powers with which God has blessed the Children of Men. Here therefore, in all Probability, we must trace the Divine Image, as well as search for that

that Preeminence and Distinction wherein the Psalmist triumphs in my Text. By these chiefly is our Nature enobled, and even our inferior Faculties raised, refined, and render'd more valuable.

The Perceptions of *Sense* belong, more or less, to all Animals; many of which are possessed equally by Men and Brutes. Nay, in some Instances, their Senses are stronger and quicker than ours; and perhaps their Instincts more numerous and extensive; which, all Things considered, may be look'd upon as necessary for the Preservation of their Beings, and the Continuance of their Species. Nevertheless how wide, how remarkable a Difference is there between their Perceptions and ours? Those very Creatures which have the sharpest and most piercing Sight, how poorly, how imperfectly do they perceive external Objects in comparison of Man? In him the external Power is accompanied with an internal one; which enables him to discover that Order, that Proportion, that Beauty, of which no inferior Creature appears to have the least Idea. Hence he becomes a fit Spectator of God's Works, and is so far capable of beholding and admiring the Wonders of the Creation: Hence he enjoys the Pleasure of extended Views, and spacious Prospects; and

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and can entertain himself with all the Varieties of Art and Nature. He can lift up his Eyes to the Heavens, and survey the Glories of the Firmament; discovering there, and indeed every where, abundant Matter for the Exercise and Employment even of his highest Faculties. And this Superiority of human Sense is not peculiar to that of Sight. While other Creatures only hear Sounds in such a manner as conduces to the Purposes of animal Life, Man is capable of discovering their Proportions, and thereby qualified for the Perception and Pleasure of Harmony; which, properly speaking, cannot be ascribed to any Ear but his own. And in him this Sense is, in a wonderful manner, subservient to the Use and Operation of his noblest Powers, as will be further observed and considered afterwards.

If from the Powers and Perceptions of Sense we go on to those of *Imagination* and *Memory*, the Mind of Man appears to still greater Advantage, and the Difference between him and other Animals much wider. Tho' the Images which Brutes derive from Sense, may really make Impression, and abide with them, so far I mean, as to recur, and present themselves to their Imaginations, as often, and in such a manner, as their Occasions require,

quire, yet how inconsiderable is this in comparison of the same Faculty in Man? For as those Images are but few, and of the lowest Kind, so the Minds of those Creatures may be look'd upon as entirely passive in the Perception of them. Such Images in them seem nothing more than so many Calls of Nature, which they observe and follow, not by Choice, but Necessity. Whereas Man has an active as well as a passive Memory: He can for the most part recollect, at pleasure, whatever he has seen; and review any of those Objects that have entered in at his Senses; and not only so, but he can alter and diversify them as he pleases. He can enlarge, or diminish, divide or compound them, without Measure, and without End. He can frame innumerable Images that he never saw, and as it were create to himself an Infinity of Conceptions that exist no where but in his own Mind. And how capacious and comprehensive is human Imagination? And what an endless Variety of Objects is treasured up in it? How rich in those natural Ideas, with which it is daily replenished; and how full and fruitful of its own Inventions!—And as we justly admire this Faculty for the Extent and Compass of it, and the Variety of its Furniture; so we cannot well avoid taking Notice

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how amazingly quick it is in its Perceptions and Operations. How soon, and how easily does the Mind bring together the remotest Objects, and connect the most distant Events! How swiftly does it run through the several Ages and Periods of the World, and carry on its Views from the Creation to the Consummation! — The Imagination is not to be bounded, or retarded, by any Limits of Time, or Lengths of Space: On the Wings of this Faculty we can fly in an Instant to the uttermost Parts of the Earth; we can ascend on high, climb the Heavens, and soar among the Stars. We can travel on, in Idea, from World to World, from System to System, till our Thoughts be quite lost and swallowed up in the Immensity of God's Works. In short, our Conceptions are not limited or circumscribed within the Bounds of the universal Creation; but can pass the utmost Confines of Matter, and wander on, without End, in the unmeasurable Regions of empty Space. — However prone Men are to abuse this Faculty, and prostitute it to the Purposes of Sin and Folly; to debase it with mean Images, or pollute it with vicious ones; whoever seriously considers the wonderful Nature of it, will soon be convinced of its Value and Dignity. Every thoughtful Man must be astonished,
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when he reflects on that Multiplicity of Objects, which are hoarded in his Mind, and impressed on his Imagination: to find in himself a Power of calling before him distinct Representations of whatever his Eyes have beheld, and of framing infinite Forms and Species that he never saw, and never heard of! Innumerable Scenes, both natural and artificial, rising in Succession, and continually entertaining the Mind through every Stage and Period of Life. This is so familiar to us, that we are apt to take little notice of it; and therefore seldom know how to estimate such a Privilege: But, however we may neglect or overlook it, it is in itself most wonderful, and clearly discovers to all that will attend, the unspeakable Power and Wisdom of our great Creator.

And yet this Faculty, surprizing as it is, is but inferior and subordinate in the Mind of Man; which possesses still higher, more valuable, and more excellent Powers. Proceed we then to consider the noblest and most divine Gift of *Reason*, or *Intelligence*; which exalts us into our Maker's Likeness, and enables us, in some measure, to imitate a Being of infinite Perfection. This then we are to look upon as the chief Distinction, the glorious Prerogative of a human Soul. To this

supreme Faculty our Senses and our Imaginations are alike subservient; as being directed by it, and deriving from it their principal Value. Without a Power of reflecting and reasoning, no Perceptions, either of Sense or Imagination, could avail us much, or procure us any considerable Satisfaction. We might take in a great Variety of Objects; but, like Brutes, should really *understand* nothing of them.——'Tis by this Faculty that we discover Causes and Effects, find out the Ends and Uses of Things, and apprehend their Properties, Relations, Consequences; comparing Objects together, and discerning where they agree, and where they differ; observing their various Connexions and Dependencies, and perceiving how one Thing infers, and follows from another. It is this Faculty which enables us to abstract our Thoughts, and turn particular Ideas into universal ones; to cultivate Arts and Sciences, invent Languages, and maintain Correspondence over the Face of the whole Earth; to form Societies, enact Laws, and establish Government. By this Faculty we launch out into the boundless Ocean of Truth, and return laden with Treasures of Knowledge: By this we commit our Thoughts to Writing, communicate them at a Distance, and transmit them to

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Posterity. By this Faculty we apprehend moral Relations, discern Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; are capable of regulating our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, and of ennobling our Minds by the Acquisition of Wisdom and Virtue. ——— Again, hence it is that we can turn our Thoughts back upon themselves, and clearly perceive the Powers and Operations of our own Minds; that we distinguish between Matter and Spirit, between our Souls and our Bodies, and find the one destin'd to Dust, the other to Immortality. Hence it is that we conclude the Existence of innumerable Orders and Degrees of superior Spirits, exalted far above us in Power and Capacity, and approaching in Resemblance nearer and nearer to the great Original. Lastly, hence it is, that we are capable of discovering and demonstrating the Existence of the Deity; of learning his Will, and looking into his adorable Attributes, and spotless Perfections: That we become acquainted with the *Majesty of his Kingdom, and the Greatness of his Excellency; before whom all the Inhabitants of the Earth, all Powers and Principalities, are reputed as nothing*: That we find abundant Cause to admire him in all his Works, and all his Ways, and every where

behold the Marks and Footsteps of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness.

Having thus considered those Faculties of the Soul which may be called its perceptive Powers, we are next to take notice of its *Liberty*, or Freedom of Will. And this may be look'd upon as an Image of the Creator's Power, as our Reason is of his Intelligence. By this Faculty we move our Bodies, and exert the Operations of our Minds; and find, in a great measure, our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, at our own Disposal. As we readily move our Limbs, though we cannot comprehend muscular Motion; so we freely command our Ideas, though we are not able to understand how it is that such a Power is exerted. Every Moments Experience assures us that we have it; though we can give very little Account of the Nature of it, or the manner of its Operation. We say to one Thought, *go, and it goeth; and to another, come, and it cometh.* And though some intrude themselves, and others, by deep Impression, or long Custom, take fast hold of the Mind, and are hard to be driven away; yet none can stay against our Wills: If we be resolute and stedfast, we can dismiss those Thoughts, and banish those Ideas, which are most familiar or importunate, and introduce what

what we please in the room of them. And the same Freedom we have in respect of our Words, and Actions, which equally depend on the uncontrollable Determinations of our Minds and Wills. In short, we are entrusted with the Guidance and Government of ourselves, and the Reins are put into our own Hands. And being thus constituted Masters of ourselves, and our own Conduct, and endued with suitable Talents and Powers, we are justly answerable for the Discharge of this important Trust. Whoever does amiss, the Fault is his own, and *Sin lieth at his Door*. A Man may indeed, in some Sense, lose this his Liberty: He may so far lose it, as to become *the Servant of Sin*, and a Slave to his Lusts and Passions; but then this Bondage is, and must be, his Choice, and he is a Slave of his own making. Doubtless Men may abuse or impair any of their Faculties: They may, by Mismanagement, dull their Senses, defile their Imaginations, corrupt their Understandings, or shackle their Wills; but this is so far from being an Argument against the Power I am speaking of, that it amounts to plain Proofs, and direct Instances of it.

I might now proceed to take notice of various Affections, and Propensities, planted in the Soul, and balanced against each other in a

wonderful manner; a Display of which would open a new Scene, and yield further Proofs of the Point before us: But this being too copious and complicated a Subject for our present Inquiry, I shall not now insist on it. The foregoing Account, though but a short and imperfect Sketch of the Powers of human Nature, may suffice to convince us of the peculiar Excellence and Dignity thereof; even without the Support and Confirmation of other Arguments, which I purposely forbear, as not directly included in the Words of my Text. At present, I only consider Man in that Light wherein the Psalmist has there placed him, as naturally endued with high Gifts, and honourable Distinctions, and fix'd in a Situation little lower than the very Angels.——We know not indeed, and should not therefore presume to define, what particular Powers belong to superior Spirits. We can neither determine to what Heights and Dignities they are exalted, nor into what Classes and Gradations they are distributed by the great Creator. But, in general, we may securely say, that they neither have, nor can have, any higher Dignity, or nobler Distinction, than to be formed, after God's own Image; and this very Honour, though in a lower Degree, the Children of Men are blessed

fed with. That Divine Likeness which consists in intellectual and moral Powers, is common to Men and Angels; though doubtless in very different Measures and Proportions: Such a Difference prevailing, without Question, in various Ranks and Subordinations, among the Angels themselves. — May it not then be allowable to magnify human Nature, and extol it, as it were, *in the Confidence of boasting?* Such a Resemblance, such an Alliance as my Text speaks of, demands our peculiar Attention; our highest Regards, and most joyful Acknowledgments. Though one Part of us be only Dust and Ashes, the other Part partakes of a heavenly Original, and claims Kindred with the Angels. Have they immaterial and incorruptible Substances? So have we. Have they Reason, Intelligence, Liberty? So have we. Are they qualified to worship the Creator, to admire him in his Works, and enjoy him for ever? So are we. Doubtless then the foregoing Doctrine is well grounded, and firmly supported; and our only remaining Concern is to make a proper Use of it. — In order thereto, I shall briefly point out such Inferences and Conclusions, as naturally flow from it; and, if we be not wanting to ourselves, will make us improve it to our

our unspeakable Comfort and Advantage.
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First place, from the Dignity of human Nature, and those distinguishing Powers which are granted us, we may justly presume, setting aside all other Proofs, that this present Life is not the whole of our Existence; but that we are designed to live again, and destined for another State. A Being so curiously framed, so richly adorned, so nobly endowed, so *fearfully and wonderfully made*, as the Soul of Man appears to be, cannot surely be confined by the Maker of it to that short Span which is here allotted us. Such a Being can never be intended to pass away like a Shadow; and, after the Term of a few Years, expire and perish for ever. If this were our Case, why such a Waste of Workmanship? Why such a Profusion of Art and Skill? Whence is it that our Talents and Endowments are thus disproportioned to our Conditions? To what End was the Divine Image planted in us? Can such excellent Powers, and sublime Faculties, be given us merely for the Purposes of this vain and transitory State? Can it be supposed that Man, after he has been tofs'd a little while on the Billows of a tempestuous World, should immediately sink in-
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to utter Oblivion? Is it to be imagined that a Race of Creatures thus furnished, and fitted out, should only rise and vanish like Bubbles in a Storm? If Death make an utter End of us; if our Souls are to *fade as Leaves*, and be cut down as *Flowers of the Field*; why were we *made little lower than the Angels, and crowned with Glory and Honour*? — Had Mankind nothing to expect beyond the Grave, their best Faculties would be a Torment to them; and the more considerate and virtuous they were, the greater Concern and Grief they would feel from the shortness of their Prospect. When a Man had greatly improved his Mind by a pious Contemplation of his Maker, and a diligent Study of his Nature and his Works; how deeply would it afflict him, to consider, that in a very short time he might be stripped of those glorious Ideas, and lose both them and himself for ever! But every wise and good Man may have the Satisfaction of assuring himself that this will not be his Fate: For *surely there is a Reward, and his Expectation shall not be cut off.* But

Secondly, Endued with such Powers, and blessed with such Prospects, we ought ever to maintain a deep Sense of our Maker's Bounty
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and Goodness, and to be continually acknowledging our Obligations with the utmost Gratitude, Sincerity, and Veneration. Nothing is more manifest than that we are bound to be thankful in proportion to the Gifts that we have received. And since the Value of these is the Rule and Measure of our Obligations, it plainly appears from the foregoing Account how immensely we are indebted! To be constituted moral Agents, and crowned with Liberty and Understanding; to bear the Signature of God's Image, and be qualified for the Joys and Glories of a blessed Immortality, are Goods really inestimable, and Privileges above all Price. As such, they deserve and demand suitable Sentiments, and the most solemn Thanksgiving. We ought to be continually extolling our supreme Benefactor, and *abundantly uttering the Memory of his great Goodness: To give him Thanks for his unspeakable Gifts; to praise him for his marvellous Works; who hath crowned us with Mercy and Loving-Kindness; and made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints.*

Thirdly, Not only in our Thoughts, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives and Actions, and through the whole Course of our Conduct,

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duct, is our Gratitude to appear. Since God has made us intelligent and free; capable of knowing and serving our Creator; we are bound, in all respects, to behave accordingly. More particularly it is incumbent on us to take special Heed that we abuse not God's Gifts; that we do not pervert the noble Faculties which he has given us, nor prostitute them to the Purposes of Sin and Folly. When God has fixed us in so high and happy a Situation, and fitted us for a State yet higher and happier, as well as more durable; when he has placed us near to the Angels, and prepared for us, in common with them, a glorious Immortality; what can be more ungrateful, what more unworthy, what more stupid, than wilfully to debase ourselves, and sink down to a Level with the Beasts that perish? What greater Indignity can we offer to the Author of our Beings, than to be thus regardless of the Honour he has done us, and the Happiness he has offered us? To riot in his Blessings, and rebel against his Goodness? To deface, as far as in us lies, his sacred Image, and drown our rational Powers in Intemperance and Sensuality? We cannot be ignorant that they were given us, not to administer to our Lusts and Appetites, but to direct and govern them: And if we suffer these

these to break loose, and give Law to our Reason; we are so far from maintaining the Dignity of our Nature, that we fall into a State lower and more abject than Brutality itself. Those Creatures which have not Understanding, must unavoidably be acted by inferior Principles: But for moral Agents to forsake the Light of Reason, and follow the Impulse of blind Passions, is the highest Affront to their Maker, and the greatest Injury that can be done to themselves. Such a Proceeding as this quite confounds the Order of Nature, and turns the human Frame upside down; transforms a Man into a Monster, and buries all his Honours in the Dust.

Fourthly, and lastly, It is not sufficient that we guard against the Abuse of our natural Powers; we are obliged, both in Point of Duty and Interest, to cultivate and improve them. Whatever Talents God commits to our Trust, whether internal or external, he expects and demands an Account. The higher human Nature is exalted, and the nearer it approaches to that of Angels, the greater Obligations Men lie under to exert accordingly. For it is the Rule both of Reason and Revelation, that *to whomsoever much is given, of them shall be much required*. Since
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God has favoured us with such valuable Powers, and precious Capacities; improveable in themselves, and designed for Improvement; they cannot be neglected by us without great Dishonour to the Donor, as well as great Detriment to ourselves. And indeed our Welfare, both here and hereafter, very much depends on the Care we take, and the Endeavour we use in this important Affair: And that from the Natures of Things, as well as by Divine Appointment. For Happiness is the natural Result of a due Use and Exercise of our Faculties. Hence flow the inestimable Advantages of Wisdom and Virtue; which outweigh, infinitely outweigh, all outward Goods, however various and abundant. Even this *Life consisteth not in such Possessions*, nor in the *Abundance* thereof; the principal Comforts and Enjoyments of which are of quite another Nature. And as to Futurity, no other Preparation, no other Provision, can avail any thing, or turn to any Account. The Joys of Heaven, whatever they may be, can rest on no other Foundation; forasmuch as without Virtue no Man can possibly be qualified for them. The Improvement of our Talents is therefore, we see, a Matter of great and eternal Consequence. Our well-being for ever depends thereupon; and every Degree of
Bliss

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Bliss is commensurate to that of our Improvement.—What remains then, but that we imprint these Truths in our Minds, and be influenced by them? That, entertaining a just Sense of our Privileges, we strive to convert them to our own true Good, and our Maker's Glory. In vain shall we boast of the Dignity of our Nature, if there be none in our Conduct. Without a suitable Behaviour, the Height of our Pretensions will only aggravate our Guilt, and increase our Condemnation. By debasing ourselves here, we shall forfeit every thing hereafter, and degrade ourselves for ever. On the other hand, if in this Life we be mindful of the Dignity of our Nature, and act agreeably thereto; if prompted by a laudable Ambition, we labour to improve it, and press on towards Perfection; we shall be exalted, in the next, above all our Hopes and Conceptions: Bliss, Glory, and Honour, shall be our Reward and our Portion; and, in the Language of the Prophet, we shall *shine like Stars for ever and ever.*

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SERMON IV.

ECCLES. xii. Part of the seventh
Verse.

*And the Spirit shall return unto God
who gave it.*

THIS Chapter begins with an Exhortation to Youth, to season their Minds with an early Sense of God and their Duty; that it may direct them in all their Ways, and be a Support and Comfort to them in the Declension of Life. The wise Preacher shews the Folly of deferring the Thoughts of Religion, and the Improvement of Men's Minds to their latter Days. He is so far from looking upon old Age as a proper Season for the Accomplishment of this great Work, that he represents it as scarce able to bear its own Weight: And then describes, in a noble Allegory, its various Infirmities and
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gradual Decays, till it terminate in Death and Diffolution. Next he pursues the Soul and Body after their Separation, points out the Fate and Lot of both, and traces them to their respective Originals. *The Dust, says he, shall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* That is, the Body shall dissolve into that Earth of which it was first composed, and be incorporated with it; but the Soul being of a higher and nobler Nature, will survive the Separation, and return into the Hands of its Creator; to give an Account of itself, and be by him treated and dealt with according to the Condition and Circumstances in which he shall find it. — My Text is therefore a plain and positive Declaration of a Future State; and, by probable Consequence, of the Perpetuity of that State; which are therefore to be the Subjects of the following Discourse.

— And what can be more worthy of our Inquiry and Concern? Of all Questions that can possibly come under our Consideration, the most important is, Whether there be not another Life after this: Whether we are to die like brute Beasts that have no Understanding, or to live again in a Future State, and exist for ever. These are Points of such vast Moment, such infinite Consequence, that they necessarily demand every Man's most serious

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Attention. In other Pursuits we may be engaged by a Principle of Curiosity, or the Love of Truth; or perhaps some particular Interest: But on the Resolution of these Points depends our All; for so indeed it is upon the Comparison. If Death make an utter End of us, and we have no Prospect beyond it; this Life may be looked upon as a mere Shadow, or a Dream not worth regarding. — But perhaps it will be asked, what Occasion there is to examine a Question that we find already determined to our hands. For does not Revelation assure us of a Future State? And are not *Life and Immortality fully brought to Light in the Gospel?* This is very true; but still the Proofs and Evidences of natural Reason deserve to be considered; partly to arm our Minds against the Objections of Unbelievers, and enable us to promote their Conviction; and partly for the Support and Confirmation of our own Faith. And indeed it cannot but give Satisfaction to every rational Christian, to find that the Doctrines of that Revelation which he has embraced, are perfectly agreeable to the Natures of Things, and the Reason of his own Mind. — Let us then briefly consider the great Doctrine of a Future State in this Light, and see what Indications, what Evidence, we can discover by it. In

order thereto it will be requisite to consider
 — The Nature of a human Soul. — The
 present Condition and Circumstances of Man-
 kind. — And the moral Perfections of our
 Maker. — I begin with enquiring into the
 Nature and Frame of a human Soul; con-
 cerning which let it be observed in the

First place, that it plainly appears to be a
 simple, uncompounded, indivisible Substance.
 All Matter is evidently Composition; every
 Part or Parcel of it being an endless Combi-
 nation or Heap of Substances; and, by Con-
 sequence, necessarily liable to Diffolution and
 Corruption. For the Particles whereof it
 consists are always unavoidably subject to Dis-
 union and Separation; and accordingly hence
 it comes to pass, that every System of Matter
 is broken up in time, and sooner or later
 moulders away. But that the Soul is not
 thus compounded, is manifest from all its Per-
 ceptions, and all its Operations; as might be
 shewn at large, were not such Arguments too
 abstracted for the present Occasion. The
 Soul then being an uncompounded, single
 Substance; can admit of no Division or Dis-
 solution; and from hence it clearly follows,
 that it is and must be incorruptible. But how
 incorruptible? May not God annihilate it
 when-

whenever he pleases? Doubtless he may; and the same may be said of the whole Creation. Whether it be probable that he will do so, is to be enquired and considered afterwards. In the mean time, we may safely conclude from the foregoing Consideration, that the Soul is not capable of being destroyed by second Causes; which is all that the present Argument pretends to prove. But

Secondly, Another Argument drawn from the Nature of the Soul is the Excellence of those Powers and Faculties which God has given it. But having particularly considered this Point in the foregoing Discourse, it will be needless to resume it here, nor shall I repeat. It may be sufficient to point out in a few Words where the Force of the Argument lies. Since God has endued us with intellectual and moral Capacities; those great and sublime Powers, which dignify our Nature, and render us Partakers of the Divine Image; it can never be supposed, with the least Colour of Probability, that he should confine us to the short Span of this present Life; and intend us, in a few Years, to perish for ever. Since the Soul of Man is so highly exalted, and so nobly framed and furnished, it must, in all likelihood, be designed for a very differ-

rent Duration, as well as a more perfect State;
— Especially if we consider

Thirdly, That we neither do nor can arrive in this Life at that Perfection, and Maturity, of which our Natures are manifestly capable. All the Creatures beneath us seem to attain their full Perfection in their present State; I mean, to rise to the Height of their respective Capacities. But this appears far from being the Case of human Souls. Even those Men that have the largest Abilities, and fairest Opportunities, and make the best Use of them, neither do nor can accomplish their Minds to the Extent of their Faculties. They can neither obtain that Measure of Knowledge, nor those Degrees of Virtue, nor that Portion of Happiness whereof they are capable. — Part of human Life is spent before the first Dawnings of Reason; and a great Part of it passed before we reach any Ripeness of Understanding. To which may be added the Disadvantages and Decays that commonly attend Men in the last Stage of Life. And how short, how scanty is the intermediate Term for the Culture of our Minds, and the Improvement of our Faculties? Yet short as it is, a great Part of it is unavoidably taken up in providing for the Occasions of our Bodies,

dies, and answering the Demands of Sense. Are we then so framed, as barely to be allowed just to taste the Sweets of Knowledge, and the Satisfaction of Truth? Are these desirable Objects set before our Eyes to engage our Affections, and excite our Longings, and as soon almost as we understand the Worth of them, to be snatched away from us for ever? Was the Soul formed with such large Capacities, for such small Improvements, and so inconsiderable a Duration? Was it fitted for a perpetual Progress, and an endless Growth; and yet designed to be cut off, as it were, in its Infancy, and perish almost at its first setting out? For, in truth, the Understandings of Men in this Life, appear only to be in their infant State; as being doubtless capable of exceeding their present Attainments, as much as the Knowledge of grown Men exceeds that of Children. — Again, the Measure of Man's Virtues and moral Graces is no less imperfect and defective: Supposing him as careful and diligent about them as he ought to be; yet even on this Supposition he could be no very great Proficient. Considering the Patterns that Men have to copy after, and the Perfections they have to imitate, a whole Eternity may seem requisite for accomplishing their Minds, and completing

their Improvements: Or, to speak more properly, they can never be compleated; because they will ever be capable of further Degrees, and higher Advancement. Besides, we contract in our first Years such an Attachment to our Senses and Appetites, and such a Fondness for their respective Objects, that the Remainder of our Lives is seldom sufficient to disengage ourselves, and recover a right Biass; much less for arriving at a State of Perfection. In short, we have so many Indispositions to remove, so many Disorders to rectify, so many evil Habits to shake off, and so many good ones to introduce and establish; that the best Men can only be considered as Beginners and Probationers in Virtue: So far are they from being able to perfect their Natures. Can it then be supposed that God should have ordained us only to make an Entrance into the Paths of Wisdom and Virtue; or, at the utmost, a very short and precarious Progress; and then totally disappear, and drop into Oblivion! When we have just found our Feet, and learned to guide our Steps; must we then be struck down, to rise no more! Can these be the Fruits of our moral Endeavours, and religious Improvements? No Man can possibly believe it, till he have quite forgotten who it is that governs the World; as will further appear

pear afterwards.—— And since Man's Virtue is thus imperfect in this Life, his Happiness must needs be so too. For as to outward Goods, they are little more than Shadows of true Bliss. The Enjoyments of this World are empty, and unsatisfactory, as well as uncertain; and the whole Train of our Pursuits is, in reality, a Succession of Disappointments. Such Objects are not big enough to answer our Faculties. *The Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear filled with hearing;* and much less is the Mind in Possession of its Wishes. Since then we cannot find true and solid Satisfaction in this State; since we *walk in a vain shew, and disquiet ourselves in vain;* we may hence derive just Hopes of better Success in another. If God created us in order to partake of the Overflowings of his Felicity; that End neither is, nor ever can be effectually answered here; where little more is allowed us than a bare Glimpse of Happiness, and that at a Distance. And who can imagine, after we have acted, or endeavoured to act, a short Part in the Theatre of the World; that the great Business of Life should then be finished, and the Scene shuts up for ever!

Fourthly, Another Indication appearing in the Nature and Frame of our Minds, is that earnest

earnest Desire of Immortality, which so uniformly and universally prevails. A future State, and that a perpetual one, is the Object of every Man's Wish; *his* only excepted, who is so obstinately and desperately guilty, as to dread the Vengeance of Heaven; and upon that Account, and that only, wishes himself out of Being. And even in this Case, the Desire of Existence is far from being extinguished. It still operates, however over-ruled by the Terrors of his Prospect. — But to proceed, I am not supposing that the Desire here spoken of was, like many others, actually planted in our Minds by the Author of Nature: A Supposition as needless, as it seems to be groundless. For the Love of natural Good being necessary and unavoidable; in order to obtain that Good, the Desire of Existence must consequently be so too. I mean, that it must take place, whenever there is Happiness in Expectation. For in this Case the Desire of Existence necessarily results from the Frame and Constitution of Nature. How then, or which way does it amount to an Argument of a Future State? Had the Creator implanted this Desire in our Minds, it might readily have been concluded that he would not fail to gratify it: But how can such a Consequence be drawn from a Desire confessedly neces-

necessary? I answer, that it is as full and forcible a Proof in this Case, as in the other. For to frame our Minds, and fix the Nature and Constitution of Things, in such a manner, as must necessarily produce this Desire; is, in Effect, the same thing, as if he had actually and directly formed the Desire itself. And therefore it is not to be supposed, in either Case, that he should subject us to inevitable Delusion and Disappointment. Had he intended us nothing beyond this Life, he would never have drawn us irresistibly into such false Hopes, and fallacious Desires. — Besides; were the Necessity of this Desire to be considered as absolute, and every way independent of the Divine Will, still the Argument would hold good. For whatever is absolutely necessary, must be just and right in itself; and, by Consequence, an Object of God's Approbation. But

Fifthly, That the Soul of Man will survive this present Life, may be further argued from the Strength of those benevolent Affections which God has planted in it, Affections that knit Mankind together, and produce all the sacred Ties of Affinity, Consanguinity, and Friendship. These Affections improved and heightened, in virtuous Characters, by a continual

tinual Exchange of good Offices; by real Worth, mutual Complacency, and reciprocal Esteem; from that Union of Minds, that sacred Tie of Friendship, which adorns and dignifies our Species, and contributes so highly to the Honour and the Happiness of human Life. The Root of it lies deep in our Nature, and the strongest Principles within us concur to lead us into it. What mean then such Propensions and Dispositions? And whence comes it to pass that we are so many ways prompted to strengthen these Bands, and draw them as close as possible? If this present State, where our *Days* are only *as an hand-breadth*, and our *Life vanisheth as a Vapour*, be the whole of our Existence; it must seem extremely hard to account for the Principles and Provisions we are speaking of. Can Men be required, by the Impulses of Nature, and the Precepts of Virtue, to form such close and cordial Confederacies; to build up the fairest and firmest Friendships, whose *Foundations are in the Dust*? When Death divides the nearest Relations, and the dearest Friends, what is it that renders such a Separation tolerable, and administers real Support and Consolation? Is it not the Expectation of meeting again in another and a better World? But if this Life was our All, and Death our utter
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Destruction; how dreadful, how insupportable would it be? How would it rack Men's Hearts to see before their Eyes a total Dissolution both of Friend and Friendship; and to find themselves just parting, never to meet more? Had therefore our Maker designed us for this Life only, he would, in all probability, have given us cooler Affections, and weaker Attachments; and thereby have prevented the terrible Anxieties above-mentioned. And indeed such strong Ligaments can never be fit for Creatures of so short a Duration. — Again, we find in our Minds a powerful Principle of Gratitude towards Benefactors; more especially our Supreme, the Author and Giver of all Good. Him we are bound, by all the Ties of Nature, and Reason, and Religion, to reverence and *love with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls*. We are every way excited, by a due Contemplation of his infinite Perfections, to frame the most amiable Ideas of him, and to work up our Minds to the highest Pitch of Esteem and Veneration: To consider the Greatness of his Power, the Excellence of his Majesty, the Depth of his Wisdom, and the Glory of his Goodness; how many and various his Benefits, how diffusive and constant his Bounty; till our Thoughts are filled, and our
 Hearts

Hearts enflamed, with the Lustre, and Beauty, and Grandeur of the Object; and all our Faculties conspire to engage and fix us in the Admiration of it. And to what End these mighty Obligations, and powerful Attractions? Why must we exert our Faculties, and raise our Affections, to the highest Pitch, in meditating on the supreme Being, and admiring and adoring his boundless Perfections; if, after a very imperfect Acquaintance, all our Hopes are at an End, and the holy Flame is soon to expire, and be extinguished for ever? Could so great and important a Preparation be required for any Purposes of this short State? Or would our bountiful Creator bring us into Being, fit us for a Participation of the sovereign Good, and when he had just begun to taste it, snatch us away, and reduce us to our original nothing? Had he intended us for this Life only, he would rather have concealed from us, as much as possible, this glorious Object; than set it before us, and draw us to it, to so very little Purpose. We may safely therefore conclude that such natural Propensions and Tendencies plainly point out another State, and can never end in Frustration and Disappointment. Were it otherwise, an *Acquaintance with God* would be so far from yielding us *Peace* and Comfort, that
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it would afflict us beyond measure, and drive us into utter Despair.

Sixthly, and lastly, Another Proof, and that a very obvious one, arises from the Suggestions of Conscience; which is continually foreboding a Future State, and urging it powerfully on the Minds of Men. It speaks so clearly and constantly in behalf thereof, and is so plain and peremptory in its Declarations, that its Testimony ought not to be rejected; and indeed cannot, without great Violence done to the Frame and Constitution of our own Minds. The Soul of Man is not only apt to smart under a Sense of Guilt, but is also liable to secret Misgivings, and painful Apprehensions of what is to follow. When a Man has notoriously violated the Laws of Heaven, or the Dictates of right Reason, his Conscience not only rebukes him for it, but is frequently spreading before his Eyes the Terrors of Futurity, and the sad Apprehensions of a miserable Doom. On the other hand, when a Man has maintained his Innocence, and held fast his Integrity; when he has carefully discharged his Duty, and lived up to the Dignity of his Nature; his Conscience not only applauds him for it, but cheers his Heart with Assurances of a future Re-

Recompence, and pleasing Expectations of a happy hereafter. Now if there be no real Foundation for these Things; if this Man's Hopes, and the other Man's Fears, are altogether groundless and chimerical; what Account is to be given of either? How came they to spread so wide, and be so deeply rooted in human Nature? — This Argument seems equally conclusive, whether we mean by Conscience merely the Operation of our intellectual Faculty, or an instinctive Principle superadded thereto. For, upon either Supposition, we are manifestly so framed, as naturally and unavoidably to fall into such a Persuasion, and fix in it. Nay, when Sin and Wickedness have made it Men's Interest to shake it off, and to wish and strive against it as much possible; they can seldom or never accomplish it. The Expectation of a Future State sticks fast in their Minds; haunting and terrifying them, in spite of all their Arts and Endeavours to the contrary. Whatever Means may be used, Conscience is never to be quite silenced; and very often it speaks so loudly and awfully, as to startle the Sinner, and makes him tremble in the midst of his vicious Pursuits, and criminal Enjoyments. What then can be the Meaning of these natural Anticipations? If there be nothing to
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come hereafter, how strangely is Man amased, and how unaccountably misled? All Appearances without him, and every Principle within him conspire to deceive him. If the Grave was his utmost Limit, why should he find himself under a Necessity of looking beyond it? To what End were such clear Prospects opened, and such strong Expectations kindled? By what strange Fate is he compelled to *walk in a vain Shew, and disquiet himself in vain?* But the Truth is, such a Supposition is destitute of all manner of Foundation; as being directly repugnant both to the Nature of God and Man; as will further appear hereafter. Whatever Conscience presages, whatever uncorrupted Reason suggests, may securely be relied on, and considered as the Voice of him, who can never disappoint his Creatures; or falsify those Expectations which he has given them. And indeed 'tis Impiety to suppose that infinite Wisdom cannot govern the World without the Help of Fallacy and Fiction.

This Argument drawn from natural Conscience will appear yet stronger, if we consider the Extent and Universality of it. It is not a Notion or an Impulse that prevails here and there; at some certain Times, and some particular Parts of the World: The Voice of

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it has been heard in all Ages, and in all Nations; and its Convictions spread over the Face of the whole Earth. Scarce an Exception to be found even among the most uncivilized and barbarous People. There is indeed, and has been all along, a great Difference in Mens Ideas of a Future State, according to the Lights received among them, and the Degrees of their Improvement; but the Doctrine itself, in some Dress or other, has universally prevailed. Which plainly shews it to be, in the strictest Sense of the Word, natural; as arising from the Frame and Constitution of our Minds, and the genuine Principles of Humanity. Was it not founded on Nature, and perfectly agreeable to unprejudiced Reason, how should it ever be so deeply rooted in the Minds of Men? Even of the best and * wisest Men, in a more peculiar manner; and those too destitute of supernatural Light, and the Benefit of Revelation. This Consideration may be justly accounted a strong Presumption in behalf of the Doctrine before us. For certainly it would be very strange, if Men's Minds were so framed and turned, that even the

* It is true indeed that we find several of the wiser Ancients rejecting the Doctrine of a Future State. But what Doctrine, and how understood? The popular and poetical Doctrine, dressed up by the fabulous Poets according to their own Imaginations. In this Sense, and, I believe, this only, was the Doctrine opposed by the Wisdom of Antiquity.

the wisest and worthiest of them should naturally run into such Sentiments concerning this Matter, as had no Foundation in Truth or Nature. What should give Mankind such an invincible Bias to Error, such an universal Tendency to Delusion? The more we consider these Things, the more we shall be at a loss to give any Account of them, but what either supposes, or must terminate in, the Truth and Reality of a Future State.





SERMON V.

ECCLES, XII. Part of the seventh Verse.

*And the Spirit shall return unto God
who gave it.*

IN a former Discourse on these Words, I proposed to consider briefly the Proofs and Evidences of a Future State, arising from natural Reason; and began with those Arguments which are plainly deducible from the Frame and Constitution of our own Minds. This Head being then dispatched, what now remains to be enquired into, is the present Condition and Circumstances of Mankind, considered relatively and in Connexion with the known Attributes and Perfections of the Deity. I shall give a short Account of each, as far as our Subject is concerned; and having laid down the Facts, produce

duce the Argument, and point out the Conclusion, which naturally flows from them.

As to the present Condition and Circumstances of Mankind, the Fact is plainly as follows. We find from daily Experience, and general Observation, that there is no regular Distribution of Good and Evil in this Life. In many Respects, *all Things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.* Though Virtue naturally tends to Happiness, and Vice is naturally productive of Misery; yet in this World neither of these Effects constantly happens: many things concurring to hinder both the one and the other. We see that good Men are exposed to various Hardships and Misfortunes; which, on numberless Occasions, they are forced to undergo. So far they oftentimes are from being happy, as might be hoped and expected, that they are deeply distressed, and greatly miserable; so far from reaping the proper Fruits of their Virtue, as to suffer like Evil-Doers, and be compassed about with a sad Variety of Wretchedness. Nay, it has too often happened, that their very Virtue has been the Occasion of their Sufferings, and the accidental Cause of all their Calamities. On the other hand, wicked Men often prosper and flourish in the midst of their Iniquities;

not only escaping the forementioned Hardships, but abounding in all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life. Nay their very Wickedness is sometimes the Occasion of their Prosperity; and a great Part of their Lives is perhaps a continued Scene of successful Vice and triumphant Villany. All Ages and Countries abound in Instances of both these Kinds, and the Observation is familiar and common among Men.——So promiscuously and irregularly are Good and Evil dispensed here below! And indeed this has been at all times so remarkable, that many ill-advised Men have rashly taken Occasion from hence to call in question either Divine Providence, or the Divine Perfections: But on very weak Grounds, as will be seen afterwards.

In the mean time, however difficult it may have been to account for the Providential Dispositions of this Life, most certain it is, that God's moral Character is, and must be, perfectly clear and unspotted. He necessarily approves Virtue, and disapproves Vice, because the one is essentially amiable, and the other absolutely odious in its own Nature. Conformably hereto, he is perpetually directed by the sacred Rule of Truth and moral Fitness in all his Proceedings, and in all his Dealings with his Creatures. A Being of in-

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finite Wisdom must, at all times, infallibly act according to the Reasons of Things; and the Right of every Case, because there is always a Motive, a powerful Motive for so doing, arising from the intrinsic Worth and Excellence of such Actions; and because, on the other hand, there can be no possible Motive to induce God, on any Occasion, to deviate from this Divine Rule. ——— Frail Man indeed is very much governed by Affections and Passions, and those alas! often irregular; but his Maker, being entirely void of all Affection, can only be influenced by Reason and Rectitude; from which there is nothing to withdraw him, and to which he is therefore immoveably attached. The Consequence of which is, the perfect Righteousness of his Government, and the inviolable Equity of all his Dispensations. ——— Two other Particulars relating to our Subject I shall only just mention, as being universally acknowledged and understood. The one is, that God is privy to our whole Conduct, and intimately acquainted with all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; and the other, that the Lot and Condition of every Creature is altogether dependent on him; Good and Evil being lodged in his Hands, and his Power of dispensing them absolute and uncontrollable. ——— These

Truths being premised, I shall now endeavour to shew how we are to argue from them, in order to a clear and satisfactory Proof of the great Point before us. And here we shall find, that, supposing our Souls to perish with our Bodies, the whole Scene of Things here below is utterly unaccountable, and indeed directly repugnant to the moral Perfection of the Deity.

If then Virtue be in itself really better and more deserving than Vice, it undeniably follows that good Men have a better Title to Favour than wicked Men; their Conduct being intrinsically more amiable and meritorious. And that Virtue is really thus preferable, is, to all intelligent Beings, as evident as the Difference between Light and Darkness. And if to all intelligent Beings, much more to the Supreme; whose *Eye* is perfectly *pure*, and his Judgment unprejudiced and infallible. Virtue therefore is secure of his Approbation; and by Consequence, virtuous Men of his Favour. For Goodness in the Action is Desert in the Agent; and Desert in the Agent is a Title that can never possibly be rejected by an all-righteous Governor. There can be no better or stronger Reason given, why God should favour one Man, and discountenance another; than that the one is virtuous, and the other
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vicious. Nay, if our Ideas may be trusted, it is the only one that can finally have any Weight with so perfect a Judge. Most certain therefore it is, that God will treat Men accordingly; judging them according to their Works, and distinguishing the Righteous from the Wicked in a most signal manner; conformably to moral Truth, and the eternal Reasons of Things. This, I say, will most assuredly be done at some time or other. But it is not done in this Life, as we have already observed and acknowledg'd; and therefore there will certainly be another. Since at present the Wicked frequently prosper, and the Righteous fall into Distress, contrary to the Deserts of the one, and the Demerits of the other; it plainly follows that there must and will be a Future State, to adjust this Irregularity, and rectify the Disorders occasioned by it. Without question God has wise Reasons for dispensing Good and Evil promiscuously in this World; and some of them we know: But without a Future State he could have none at all. Nay, such a Proceeding would, in that Case, be directly repugnant to all the Reason in the World. Was there to be no Life hereafter, every Man would undoubtedly be happy or unhappy here in Proportion to his Virtues or Vices. All the Events and
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Dispensations of Providence would turn upon this Hinge, and the Blessings of Heaven be distributed by this Rule. But since we find it in Fact very much otherwise, the Doctrine before us seems as clear and certain, as that God *loveth Righteousness, and hateth Iniquity.*

Here perhaps it may be alledged, that the best Men, notwithstanding their Virtues, have transgressed more or less, and are therefore Sinners in the Sight of God: That upon this Account they have no Right to complain of their present Hardships and Sufferings, supposing these Sufferings not to exceed the Proportion of their Demerits. To this I answer, that however this Allegation may serve to stop the Mouths, and silence the Murmurs of unhappy Men, it no way affects the Argument before us; which is drawn from the moral Perfection of the Deity, and that Rule of Righteousness by which he must necessarily be supposed to proceed in all his Dispensations. The best Men, we are told, have failed and fallen short of their Duty, and are therefore justly punishable at any time. Be it so. But have not wicked Men failed and offended much more; and therefore deserved much greater Punishment? Supposing then no Future State, how comes it to pass that they are not punished, constantly punished in this World,

World, in proportion to their Demerits? If the former be just and fit, do we not plainly see that the latter is much more so? To *execute Sentence speedily* on good Men, because they have sometimes erred and done amiss; and at the same time quite overlook the Crimes of notorious Sinners, is impossible to be reconciled with any Idea of moral Truth. Whatever Reason be assigned for the immediate Punishment of those Delinquents who are least guilty, must needs hold much stronger in respect of those who are most guilty. And therefore, excluding a Life to come, no wicked Man would ever have prospered in this. And the Reason is because a righteous and perfect Governor can never act arbitrarily, or capriciously; but will always follow the Rule of Equity, and the Right of the Case. It must indeed be confessed, that in very many Cases, we cannot presume to judge of the Grounds and Reasons of the Divine Conduct: But in the present Case they are so plain, and clear, and cogent, that if there be any Truth in our Faculties, and Virtue and Vice be real Things, there is no room for Doubt, or the least Suspicion of Error. God will assuredly manifest his Righteousness in the most publick manner, and redress the Confusions of this present Life.

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Should it be further urged, that the Sufferings of the Righteous are compensated by that Serenity of Mind, and Self-satisfaction, which their Virtue affords them; and that therefore there is no Occasion for a Future State to make them amends; the Answer is as follows. It is indeed readily granted, that Virtue is always amiable, always beneficial in its own Nature; and would be greatly so in favourable Conditions and Circumstances. But in the Case we are speaking of, its principal Comforts vanish, and the Enjoyment of it dwindles to almost nothing. Supposing a Man both virtuous and prosperous; he could not be accounted happy, had he no Prospect beyond the Grave. Neither outward Advantages, nor inward Improvements, could avail him much, if he stood so near the Brink of Destruction, and expected so soon a total Dissolution both of Soul and Body. But this is not the Case before us; we are speaking of a good Man very unhappy in this World, and deeply distressed; surrounded with Grievs and Calamities, and perhaps his whole Life a continued Scene of Sorrow and Tribulation. Here then the Question is, whether, without a Future State, his Virtue be able to make him ample Amends for all his Sufferings; to heal the Wounds of Misfortune, and support him
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sinking under a Load of Adversity. Alas! this is so far from being the Truth of his Case, that he is almost entirely disqualified to receive any Enjoyment, or any Comfort from his Virtue. Extremity of Pain and Grief will admit of no Comfort but what beams from above. And if the Windows of Heaven were quite shut, what could a good Man, in such a Condition, do more, than sit down disconsolate, and abandoned to Sorrow and Despair? But is not Virtue, in itself, fair, and lovely, and full of Charms? True; but he is not at Leisure, not in a Condition, to attend to them: And if he was, the more lovely he found it, the more it would grieve him to think, that he had no Hopes of living to enjoy it; excepting the poor Remainder of a short and precarious Life.——Can then a righteous God leave virtuous Men thus destitute; or bring them into the World for such a Purpose as this? Impossible. Such a Proceeding appears quite inconsistent even with human Goodness; much more with Divine.

But further; it may deserve to be considered, that Part of our Species are cut off before they are capable of either contracting Guilt, or even knowing the Difference between Vice and Virtue. Among these doubtless there are some whose Portion of Evil exceeds their Good;

whose little Lives are almost filled up with Pain, and Suffering, and Lamentation. Now if these Hardships are to be made up abundantly in another Life, there is no Difficulty at all in the Case. But supposing no Future State, it seems not only difficult, but utterly impossible to be accounted for; since, on this Supposition, their very Existence is a Calamity, an Injury, a Curse. It is not conceivable that the all-wise and all-perfect Creator should produce any Beings in vain; much less that he should produce them for such an End as is worse than none at all. I will not presume to say, that the Communication of Good is the sole End of the Creation; but one End, one chief End, we plainly perceive it must have been: And therefore we may be assured that no Creatures can be sent into the World with a quite contrary View; neither can any be treated, without any Demerit of their own, so hardly and rigorously, as to give just Cause for doubting of such a Conclusion. If then the foregoing Case be really Fact, as cannot I think be denied, or disputed; it affords, of itself, an unanswerable Proof of a Future State.

———And if among the adult Part of Mankind, there are, or have been, any so innocent and good, and yet so unhappy and wretched, that their Sufferings have exceeded the Proportion

tion of their Demerits; the same Consequence will follow, and every such Instance will yield an irresistible Argument for the Truth of that Doctrine which we have been considering. For most certain it is, that God can never ordain any Man to suffer more than he has deserved, without making him full Reparation either here, or hereafter.

Thus then we may safely and justly argue from the present Condition and Circumstances of Mankind; which, without a Future State, are plainly repugnant to the Divine Attributes; though with a Future State, as plainly and perfectly agreeable thereto. For admitting such a State, the unequal and irregular Distributions of this Life are easily solved, and readily accounted for. Nay, they become not only intelligible, but manifestly convenient, suitable, and fit; as directly conducing to prepare Mankind for such a State, by a fuller Exercise and Improvement of every Virtue. For a Life to come, it may be, and is, highly fitting, that we be trained and tutored here in a State of Discipline and Probation. Human Virtue may require, in order to its Perfection and our Happiness, that it be thus tried, prepared, and purified: And different Minds may require different Trials, and various Dispensations. On which Account we have no Reason

Reason to wonder, when we find good Men in great Distress; this being perhaps no more than what is necessary to form an exalted Character; to produce more illustrious Virtue, and triumphant Merit. — To *Strangers and Pilgrims, seeking a better Country*, and travelling to their appointed Home, no Difficulties or Distresses on the Road can seem either unnatural, or intolerable; especially when they have the Pleasure and the Encouragement to know, that their own final Advantage will be thereby promoted. Since then our Condition and Circumstances here below, are no other than what might be expected, supposing a Future State; this may be looked on as a further Presumption of the Reality of such a State. And thus our present Life will be considered, what it really is, a Nursery for the next; where we are to be properly educated, and carefully disciplined, for a more durable and blissful State. But, on the other hand, if we exclude Futurity, and give up all our Hopes and Pretensions beyond the Grave; this present Life becomes, in the Eyes of thinking Men, all Darkness, Discomfort, and Perplexity; a sad Scene of desperate Disorder, and inextricable Confusion. This, I have shewn, can never be the Case of Mankind, while they are under the Government of infinite

finite Wisdom and Goodness. — Upon the whole, whether we consider the Nature and Condition of Man, or the Nature and Perfections of his Maker, we find plain Indications, and solid Proofs of the important Doctrine now before us.

What remains to be considered is, whether or no the Future State here treated of will be of perpetual Duration. It does not indeed necessarily follow, that because the Soul survives the Body, therefore it must exist for ever. For doubtless it must always be in the Creator's Power to put a Period to its Existence; and therefore its Immortality entirely depends on his good Will and Pleasure. And if this Will has been revealed, as God be thanked it has, it must needs be peculiarly fitting to have Recourse to that Revelation; as will be observed afterwards. However, at present, let us go on with the Evidence of natural Reason; which, even as to this Point, deserves our Attention. Since then God is pleased to prolong the Soul's Existence after Death, and provide for it another State, as appears from a great Variety of Proofs; it follows from thence, with high Degrees of Probability, that he will always continue its Being, and suffer it to enjoy that Immortality which seems to be the Privilege of its Nature.

The Force of that Argument, which we have just examined, concerning the Sufferings of the Innocent, and the Adversities of the Righteous, does not indeed extend thus far; because another Life of a limited Duration may undoubtedly be sufficient to compensate both. Nevertheless we have, even from Reason, good Grounds to hope that our next Life will be unlimited and endless.——I shall content myself at present with mentioning these two Things. *First*, That, as far as our Ideas reach, no good Reason can be assigned, why God should interpose to prevent the Immortality of the Soul; nothing of this sort having ever been urged, or produced, with the least Appearance or Colour of Probability. And *Secondly*, good Reasons may be assigned for the contrary Supposition. The Ends of the Creation, as far as we know them, are confessedly the Glory of God, and the Good and Happiness of his Creatures. Now the longer good Men are suffer'd to exist in an happy State, the more they must needs be blessed, and God be glorified: and by the Perpetuation of such a State, we plainly perceive that the same great Ends will be promoted for ever.——But further; these Reasons against Annihilation will not only eternally hold good, but be continually gathering new Force and Strength.

Strength. The longer virtuous Men live, in such a State, the fitter they must be for Life; and therefore, we may presume, the less will be the Danger of Extinction. Their Faculties must grow, their Capacities enlarge, and all their Improvements increase, through every Part of Duration. Great Advances must be ever made in Knowledge, and Virtue, and Happiness. They must be continually more and more capable of contemplating, admiring, and enjoying the Author of all Good, and the Fountain of all Perfection. To imagine, after this Progress, and these Exaltations of their Nature, that God should cut the Thread of their Existence, and put an End to their Beings, is to suppose him acting, as far as we can judge, quite contrary to the Reasons of Things, and the chief Ends of the Creation. For it seems very evident to our Understandings, that much more Happiness is producible by a Grant of Immortality, than by any Succession of Spirits temporary and mortal; forasmuch as the Happiness of the blessed must naturally rise in a very high Proportion to the length of their Existence.——Again; by Parity of Reason, it might as well be concluded, that God will some time or other annihilate the Angels, and destroy the whole Host of Heaven, as that he should take away the Ex-

istence of *just Men made perfect*. There will be, both for Men and Angels, an Employment adequate to the Eternity we are speaking of. They may search for ever into the Divine Perfections, and Divine Workmanship, without being able to exhaust the Subjects, or even comprehend them. They may copy after God's moral Excellence, striving to approach it nearer and nearer through all Ages; and yet ever remain at an infinite Distance from it. In short, nothing less than Immortality, nothing less than an endless Duration, can suit that transcendent Object, for the Study, Adoration, and Enjoyment of which they were, both of them, originally created. — These Considerations, together with the Arguments before produced from the Frame and Constitution of our own Minds, appear fully sufficient for the Conviction of unprejudiced Men. — Yet after all, tho' the Doctrines of a Future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, are supported by a great Variety of clear and convincing Proofs, arising from the mere Light of natural Reason; yet it is well and happy for us, that those Proofs are enforced and confirmed by *Revelation*: That we have Assurances from Heaven of our perpetual Existence, and that *Life and Immortality are fully brought to Light in the Gos-*

Gospel. This gives a powerful Sanction to the Dictates of our Consciences, and the Decisions of our Understandings. As the Evidences of Reason strengthen our Faith, so the Evidences of Faith establish the Doctrines of Reason; thereby leaving us doubly without Excuse, if we reject the Truth, or suffer our Minds to be drawn into a Disbelief of this most important Article.

The Time will only permit me to point out very briefly what Use we ought to make of the foregoing Doctrine. — Are we then designed for Immortality, and fitted with suitable Faculties for an endless Duration? How grateful a Sense ought we to have of the Creator's Goodness and Bounty! What Tributes of Praise and Thanksgiving are due for such mighty Blessings, such inestimable Privileges! What Returns of pious Adoration, and religious Reverence, in Will, Word, and Deed! — But more especially ought we to take Care, as the best and most acceptable Expression of our Gratitude, that we make a wise and proper Use of these Blessings; that we walk worthy of the high Expectations, and the glorious Prospect which he has set before us; that we demean ourselves in such manner as becomes those who are *made little lower than the Angels*, and alike destined for Im-

Immortality; that by a diligent Application to Wisdom and Virtue we improve our Minds as much as possible, and prepare them for Eternity to the utmost Advantage. — On our Conduct here depends all our Success hereafter. If by evil Practices, and vicious Habits, we lay the Foundations of a miserable Futurity, our Joy will be turned into Grief and Terror, and the greatest of all Blessings into the deepest Calamity, and the direst Curse. In the next Life Vice and Virtue will each produce its own natural Effects, however external Causes may co-operate with them. Every Vice, every evil Habit, that we carry with us into another World, will, like an evil Spirit, haunt us for ever, and persecute us to all Eternity. No Fiends, no Furies, will be able to torment Men hereafter like Sin and Guilt; the Rage and Remorse of which no Words can represent, no Thoughts conceive. On the other hand, every Grace, every Virtue, every good Habit, will enlarge our Capacities for Happiness, and be a further Preparation for it. They will not only preserve the Soul in perpetual Health, and Ease, but prove inexhaustible Sources of Joy and Gladness. They will likewise make it meet to partake of those unspeakable Felicities which God has prepared for the Righteous. And how

how blessed must that Immortality be, where every thing within, and every thing without, administer Delight, and conspire to augment and establish their Happiness. ——— Lastly, since there will be another Life, and that an eternal one, it must be very absurd to engage our Affections deeply in this; or to be immoderately solicitous about any of its vain and transitory Enjoyments. To set our Hearts on the mean and perishing Objects of this World, is, in Effect, to forget the Privileges of our Nature, and the Joys and Glories of a blessed Immortality. What are Hours, or Days, or Years; nay what is Time itself in Comparison of an eternal Duration! This Life can bear no Proportion to the next; and yet we suffer it almost to engross our Thoughts, and run away with our Affections. We regard this very short Span of Time, as if it was Eternity; and we regard Eternity, as if it were nothing. Our Reason plainly informs us that, supposing a Future State dubious and uncertain, still we ought to provide for the important Chance, and become Adventurers for another World. But since we have all the Evidence and Assurance that can, in Reason, be expected, or even desired; what Words are able to express the Folly, or rather Frenzy of those, who slight such a Good,
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and neglect so great Salvation!—To conclude, if the greatest and most durable Happiness that we are capable of wishing, be allowed to merit our Attention and Concern; then have we just Cause to bend our Thoughts this way, and devote our best Endeavours to the Attainment of it. Our true Interest prompts us to withdraw our Affections from the fleeting Shadows of this Life; continually exhorting us to moderate our Pursuit of *Things temporal, that we finally lose not the Things which are eternal.*



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